

Erasmus+ Policy Statement of the University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol (HOK) 2021-2027

The University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol (HOK) has seen itself as an international higher education institution since it was founded in 1997, and it has been able to continually pursue and further expand this reputation as an international higher education institution with the accreditation of the International Business Studies degree program that contains a mandatory semester abroad as well as a one-semester internship abroad or an internship at a company that operates internationally. Kufstein University submitted and successfully carried out its first Erasmus application in 1998. The goal of a stringent international focus was successfully implemented by introducing a mandatory semester abroad for all full-time bachelor degree programs and a 20% foreign-language portion in the curricula, by creating a special study program, the International Program (IP) – consisting of 24 English-language courses and 30 additional English-language courses from regular bachelor and master programs – and by sending abroad more than 300 outgoing and welcoming more than 200 incoming students.

The University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol has pursued the strategic goals of an international focus, mobility, and a multicultural character since it was founded. The modernization and internationalization strategy of HOK focuses on mobility of students and university personnel, developing international research projects, and creating a regional international focus as well as integrity. The elementary building blocks of this are creating international standards, mobility, and continually updating our knowledge. One goal of our internationalization strategy is to explain to students the relevance of international and intercultural skills and to give them the tools to develop these capabilities by a mandatory semester or year abroad as well as an internship. Kufstein University supports the European idea with its mandatory semester abroad, encourages young people to participate in democracy in Europe and elsewhere and thus invests in the development of knowledge, qualifications, and skills of individual people using the aspects of equal opportunity and inclusion. Participation in the Erasmus+ Program is a firmly anchored component of our institutional internationalization strategy that not only refers to student mobility but also to mobility of university personnel that teach or that have other jobs at the University. This program also supports international collaboration and development.

Erasmus + actions

The University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol sees its societal responsibility to strive to be a business-oriented, diverse, participative, and international University of Applied Sciences, where

networking is strengthened and used, innovation is made possible and promoted, and an international focus is designed and lived. Participating in the program is also an effective instrument for us to promote intercultural understanding and diversity, to support the formation of a society with stronger cohesion without exclusion, and to create a European educational area. This is why HOK would like to participate in all three Erasmus Key Actions, whether it participates as a coordinator or as a partner. For more than 20 years, the Kufstein University has participated in Key Action KA1 – mobility for students and university personnel – and is following specified processes that serve to monitor quality and also help mobility participants with implementation.

In practice, implementation of student mobility with partner universities is as follows: Mobility measures must only be implemented in accordance with a previously concluded cooperation agreement between the higher education institutions. This cooperation agreement sets forth the specific tasks and responsibilities of the individual parties as well as their obligation, for example with regard to selecting, preparing, receiving, and integrating mobile students, and to apply mutual quality criteria.

Sending higher education institutions are responsible for selection and allocation processes of students. They are also responsible for fair, transparent, proper selection criteria (ranking of grades, language skills, motivation letters, etc.) as well as for documenting the process and archiving the process documentation. During this process, compliance with the principles of non-discrimination is important, especially the equality of women and men as well as the integration and promotion of mobility opportunities for socially disadvantaged students.

Sending universities select their students before the beginning of the semester, they nominate them to the partner university, and the receiving university offers preparatory language courses. Sending universities verify whether students who go abroad meet language requirements. This serves the purpose of quality assurance and provides a guarantee to the partner university and the student that the student can understand the classroom instruction at the receiving university. Both higher education institutions ensure that socially disadvantaged students or students with special needs are encouraged and given support to participate in mobility measures. The Kufstein University puts forth effort to provide mobility for each student whether this takes place by active support to receive a scholarship or by the "Internationalization at Home" program that offers non-mobile students the opportunity to receive an international education on site by taking part in the International Program (IP).

Before the beginning of a stay abroad, the students receive information about the higher education institution, about the course program, about the technical and linguistic requirements, about the required credits/ECTS (recognition), and grading system. Stays abroad are carried out on the basis of the standards of the ECTS & DS label, which provide academic transparency and recognition of academic achievements after the stay. An individual Learning Agreement is concluded before the start

of the study abroad program, which is only valid if the University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol, the partner university, and the student have signed it. After the mobility phase has ended, the higher education institutions agree to issue a transcript of records with a complete listing of credits and to mutually recognize the listed credits, provided that they are approved in the Learning Agreement in advance by the academic supervisor and the mobile students. These measures and offers are evaluated and assessed each semester by incomings. The outgoing students turn in their evaluation forms and experience reports each semester, and the reports are used for quality assurance or quality improvements for the exchange program.

Promotion of mobility in the areas of degree programs and teaching is an aspect of our comprehensive internationalization strategy, which is why HOK also supports international expertise and knowledge transfer in the form of lecturer and personnel mobility in addition to student mobility. By doing this, Kufstein University not only ensures the quality of the study programs and administration but also deepens and expands existing partnerships. We as an institution support gaining lecturers and personnel from partner universities as well as sending lecturers and personnel to partner universities. Lecturer and personnel mobility is also handled by a transparent, fair selection procedure. Before a lecturer or staff member participates in mobility, a Grant Agreement is concluded between the mobile person and the higher education institution along with a Staff Mobility Agreement that is signed before the beginning of the mobility by the mobile person, the receiving higher education institution, as well as the sending institution. A letter of confirmation from the receiving higher education institution confirms and once again officially recognizes the stay, indicating the exact number of days.

Depending on the opportunities that the new generation of EU programs offers, HOK is very interested in increasing and expanding its collaboration with higher education institutions, companies, and organizations. Selected cooperation opportunities have strategic importance, especially for developing Erasmus Mundus joint master programs. For this and the support of political development and collaboration, active participation by the institutes of the University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol plays a great, important key role in implementation as well as target achievement.

Goals & planned effects on HOK of participating in the Erasmus+ Program

As an internationally networked higher education institution, diversity is part of our everyday life, and we promote an understanding of people from different cultures. At the same time, we see ourselves as an independent higher education institution rooted in our region, and we make a purposeful contribution to society, while strengthening the Kufstein location and Tyrol. The University of Applied Sciences Tirol has already completely implemented the following goals regarding student mobility: a mandatory semester abroad for all full-time degree programs, establishing mobility windows for all

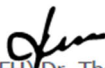
degree programs, as well as complete recognition of credits abroad. The quality of how student mobility is carried out is monitored by indicators such as evaluating experience reports of student mobility measures and is also ensured by accreditations and quality seals such as the ECTS & Diploma Supplement label.

HOK has set the following new goals in this regard:

- *Introduction of pre-departure meetings*
Students are currently prepared for their stay abroad at an informational event for each individual degree program. In view of and in preparation for the upcoming Finance & Mobility Management, HOK is planning on implementing a supplementary source of information in the form of mandatory pre-departure meetings that are to take place in small groups sorted by criteria such as country groups (country tables for the students to get to know each other). At these meetings, the Grant Agreement, the Learning Agreement, and all information about Erasmus+ support are to be explained and signed, and general information, organizational concerns, and safety instructions are to be discussed.
- *Increasing the number of internships abroad*
HOK would like to achieve a one-third increase in the number of students who complete their mandatory internship abroad.
- In addition to acquiring professional and intercultural skills, we especially feel that the role of the students as "*ambassadors*" of the sending higher education institution, of the receiving higher education institution, and of the program is an important aspect. We see the students as a voice of and as a link between countries, economies, and higher education institutions and especially promote this by disseminating information about the experiences that our students make abroad by communicating this information internally (via newsletter, magazine, "WatchOut," annual report, and our homepage) and externally on various channels and at events (HomeComing, open house, network meetings, and exhibitions). Our higher education institution also has set a goal of communicating this information by setting up a series of events in the form of *fireside chats* where outgoing students tell their class as well as future outgoing students in the study program about their experience, and the indicator of "one fireside chat per year per degree program" is used for comparison purposes.
- The aspect of *civil engagement* as part of Social Erasmus+ is also to be supported with the help of and increased collaboration with organizations and higher education institutions. This produces positive synergy effects such as strengthening long-term, sustainable collaboration in international and national contexts with various cooperation partners who promote political dialog and the global attractiveness of European university education.
- Another goal is to *qualitatively expand existing partnerships, to continually maintain existing networks, and to promote international projects and research.*

- As part of *lecturer and personnel mobility*, our institution supports expanding, collaborating with, and deepening international relationships. We not only focus on international expertise and knowledge transfer but also on promoting intercultural skills, knowledge of European and international contexts, and an understanding of other cultures and ways of working. This is why HOK would like to continue to expand lecturer mobility and has set a goal of sending 10 lecturers per year and of welcoming 10 incoming lecturers per year. In addition, every research assistant should complete a guest stay within five years. Personnel mobility should be increased to four people per year.

The University of Applied Sciences Kufstein Tirol was awarded the Erasmus Charter and is committed to the principles and requirements set forth by the program and complies with these principles and requirements.


Prof. (FH) Dr. Thomas Madritsch
Geschäftsführung


Prof. (FH) PD Dr. Mario Döller
Rektor


Mag. Noureddine Rafili
Head of International Relations Office

